



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte  
agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh  
Regulating Health +  
Social Care Professionals

## Psychologists Registration Board

# Pre-Registration Education and Training Requirements

Clinical Psychologists | Counselling Psychologists | Educational Psychologists



Criteria for Education and Training Programmes – Public Consultation

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# Introduction

CORU is Ireland's multi-profession health and social care regulator. Our role is to protect the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education, training and competence through statutory registration of health and social care professionals. CORU was set up under the *Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (as amended)*. It is made up of the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and the Registration Boards, one for each profession named in our Act.

On 21 July 2017, the then Minister for Health, Simon Harris TD, confirmed the establishment of the Psychologists Registration Board. From its establishment the Board has been working towards introducing statutory regulation for the profession of psychology.

The Psychologists Registration Board has made significant progress towards this goal having identified a regulatory model that will allow for the protection of the title 'psychologist' in Ireland and, ultimately, the protection to the public.

The introduction of this regulatory model will come in two streams.

## Stream One

Introduction of Statutory Regulation for:

- ➡ Clinical Psychologists
- ➡ Counselling Psychologists
- ➡ Educational Psychologists

## Stream Two

Introduction of a regulatory model that will facilitate the regulation of all other psychology specialisms and protection of the title 'psychologist'

The Board will establish four divisions of its register: a division for each of the three areas of specialisation identified in Stream One and a fourth division that will enable the protection of the title 'psychologist' in Stream Two.

In establishing each division of its register, the Board is responsible for setting the requirements for entry. The first of these requirements are what are known as pre-registration education and training requirements.

## Pre-Registration Education and Training Requirements

The requirements each Registration Board set for entry to its register are competency based: the Board sets the threshold level of professional knowledge, skills and behaviours that is required for safe and effective practice. By setting this threshold for entry, the Board provides the public with assurance that all registered professionals are trained to a consistent and acceptable level for safe practice, ensuring public protection. These standards are known as the *Standards of Proficiency*.

Once a register is opened, all **new entrants into practice** of that profession must hold a recognised qualification that has been assessed as consistently producing graduates that meet all the Standards.

Education providers design their programmes to deliver on all the Standards and make an application to the Registration Board for their programme to be approved. The Board sets what are known as *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*, all of which have to be met as part of the programme approval process.

Taken together the *Standards* and the *Criteria* are known as the Registration Board's **Pre-Registration Education and Training Requirements**.

If the Board determines that the programme meets all of its pre-registration education and training requirements, it approves the qualification, which is subsequently listed on its Approved Qualifications Bye-Law.

Any applicant holding an approved qualification is eligible to apply for entry to the Register.

The Registration Board's pre-registration education and training requirements **only apply to new entrants into practice in Ireland (i.e. new graduates or international applicants)**.

The Psychologists Registration Board has drafted three distinct sets of draft *Standards of Proficiency* and *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*; one set each for Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists and has opened a public consultation process seeking feedback from all stakeholders.

This public consultation will provide you with the opportunity to provide feedback on this key step towards opening divisions of the register for Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists.

This eBook resource aims to support stakeholders in engaging with this consultation process by providing detail around what the *Criteria* for Education and Training Programmes are and how they are used in regulation.



# Chapter 1

## Criteria for Education and Training Programmes: The Basics



### What is the *Criteria*?

The *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes* identify the design and management requirements that an education provider must meet in order to ensure that its programme can consistently produce graduates that meet the *Standards of Proficiency*.

By ensuring that an education and training programme meets the *Criteria*, an education provider is demonstrating there are satisfactory systems and mechanisms in place to ensure students graduating from the programme have achieved the threshold knowledge, skills and professional behaviours required to practise proficiently, safely and autonomously upon entry to a professional register.

The Psychologists Registration Board has drafted three distinct sets of *Criteria* – each specific to the education and training requirements for Clinical Psychologists, Counselling Psychologists and Educational Psychologists.

### What is the *Criteria* used for?

The *Criteria* is used in the **approval and monitoring of education and training programmes**:

- ➔ Education providers seeking approval for their education programmes must demonstrate to the Psychologists Registration Board how it meets the *Criteria*. It must meet **all** these requirements in order to evidence how it ensures each student who completes the programme has achieved the *Standards of Proficiency*.



## Where do the *Criteria* come from?

The Psychologists Registration Board is responsible for drafting the specialism-specific criteria for education and training programmes.

The Board is comprised of practitioners, representatives from education and training and lay members. This allows for a broad range of voices and perspectives shaping their design, thereby ensuring that the standards are relevant and consistent with current practice, that they are aligned with service user and employer needs and that they support the education and training of a sustainable, flexible and dynamic future workforce.

Where appropriate – and in order to ensure the breadth of specialist area specific knowledge and experience – the Board consults with external expertise during its drafting process.

### **The Board undertakes an extensive research process which informs the drafting of its standards. This involves:**

- ➔ review and evaluation of its draft *Standards of Proficiency* in the context of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level Descriptors;
- ➔ review of comparator international education and training requirements;
- ➔ review of education and training requirements set by the professional body;

- ➔ consideration of the contemporary practice and structure of the profession in Ireland; and
- ➔ in the light of all of these different avenues feeding into the Board's assessment, it must ensure that its regulatory decision is in line with the legislative parameters set by the European Union's Directive on Proportionality that requires that any new (or amendment to existing) regulation must not restrict access to or the practice of a regulated profession for EU citizens.

### **Who is involved in this?**

All key stakeholders involved in the practice of each of the three areas of specialisation – practitioners, education providers, professional bodies, employers, unions, as well as all members of the public – are invited through this public consultation process to submit their views and feedback on the draft *Criteria*.

Following this consultation process, the Board will review and assess all the feedback submitted from stakeholders and, where appropriate, revise its *Criteria*.

In setting its *Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*, the Board is informed by international best practice in education and practice and by the views and perspectives of a diverse body of stakeholders.

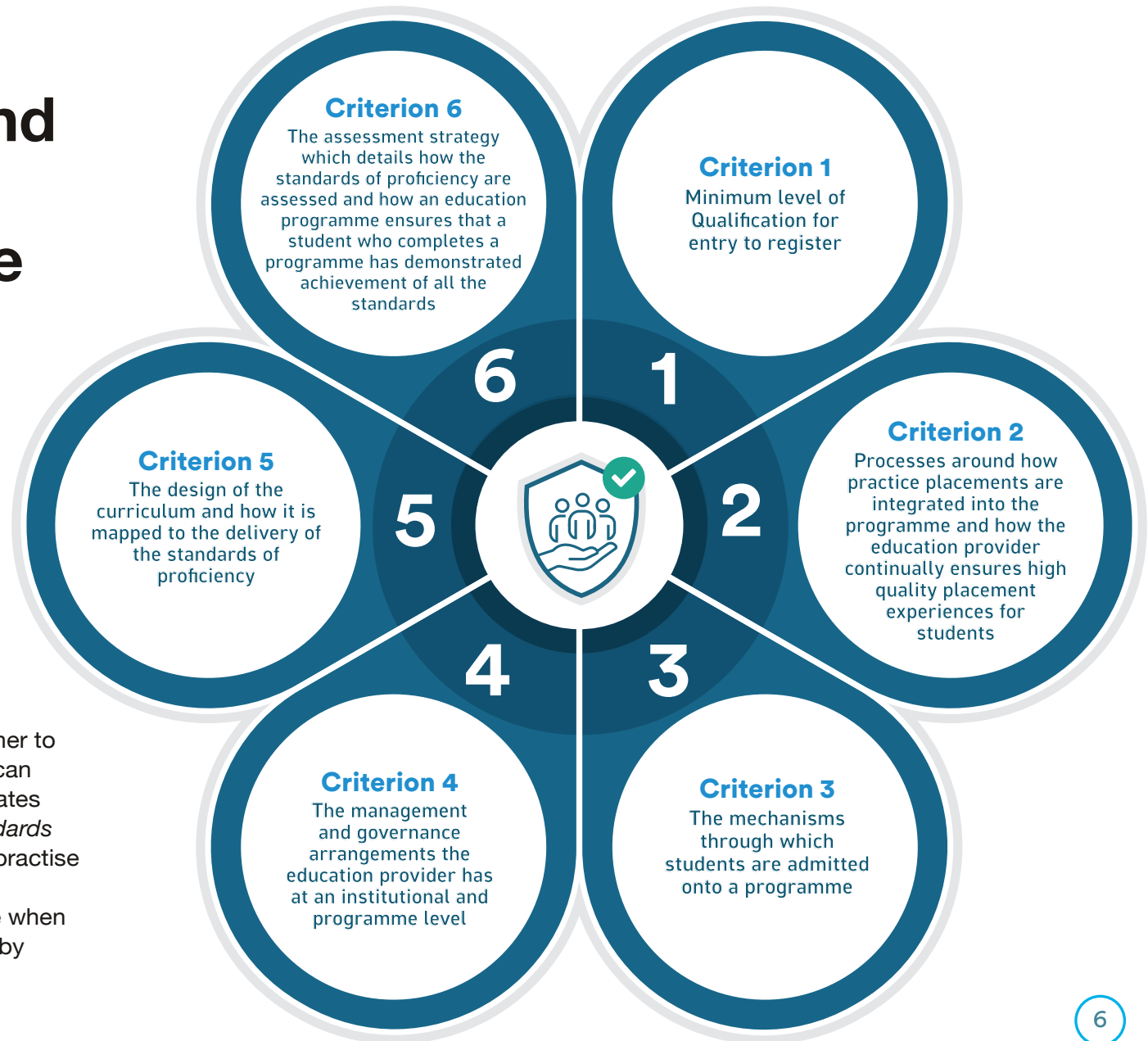


# Chapter 2

## Criteria and Quality Assurance

The Criteria is structured around six key areas:

All these areas work together to ensure that a programme can continually produce graduates who have met all the *Standards of Proficiency* and so can practise safely and competently in delivering high quality care when they join the register, thereby ensuring public protection.



## Construction of the *Criteria*

As a multi-profession regulator, CORU currently has responsibility for the statutory regulation of 12 health and social care professions. While each profession has its own distinct character, practice and identity, there are naturally areas of commonality across them. Reflecting this, the Health and Social Care Professionals Council establishes what are known as *Framework Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*. Each Registration Board adopts this Framework and then tailors the *Criteria* to reflect the identity and practice of the profession.

The Psychologists Registration Board has adopted the *Framework Criteria for Education and Training Programmes*. There are two specialism-specific criteria Board has responsibility for drafting.



## Feedback is invited on *Criteria*



There are two specialism-specific requirements in each of the *Criteria* documents for Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists that the Psychologists Registration Board is seeking your feedback on:

- ➔ the threshold – or minimum – level of qualification for entry to the register (**Criterion 1.1**); and
- ➔ the requirements around practice placement including the minimum number of days to be completed in practice education and service user groups to engage with during placement experience (**Criterion 2.2**).



# Chapter 3

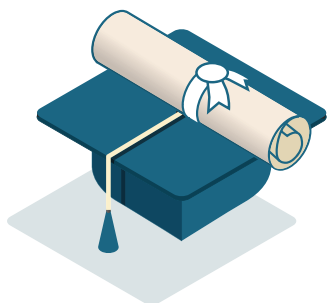
## Level of Qualification

### Threshold Level of Qualification

The threshold level of qualification refers to the minimum level on the National Framework of Qualifications an education and training programme – and its associated qualification – must be designed to in order to deliver on the *Standards of Proficiency*.

### The Board's Proposal

The Psychologists Registration Board is proposing to set the minimum level of qualification for entry to the Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists divisions of its Register at **NFQ Level 10 (Doctorate/Post-Doctorate Level)**.



### The Board's Process

In proposing the threshold qualification level for entry to practice in Ireland at Level 10, the Board examined:

- the NFQ Level Descriptors which describe the threshold knowledge, skills and competencies required at each level;
- the threshold level of practice for each of the areas of specialisation as articulated in the draft *Standards of Proficiency* for Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists;
- the nature and practice of the specialisms as providing advanced and specialised care on a one-to-one basis with a range of diverse and vulnerable service user groups;
- the current entry requirements into practice for each of the areas of specialisation in Ireland; and
- comparator international requirements for entry into practice.



### The Board's Rationale

Having reviewed the articulation of the draft *Standards of Proficiency* for the three areas of specialisation, both in the light of the NFQ Level Descriptors and the language used to articulate the classification of knowledge, skills and behaviours in the *Standards*, the Board concluded that NFQ Level 10 reflects the demands of professional knowledge and skill required for entry into practice of these specialisms in Ireland.

# Chapter 4

## Practice Placement Requirements

### Specialism-Specific Practice Placement Requirements

The Psychologists Registration Board has proposed specialism-specific requirements around the minimum amount of practice education experience a student must complete as part of an education and training programme in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology.

Education providers have flexibility around how to design and structure their programmes to meet these placement requirements; there's no one way to do this.

The Board has articulated two key components to its requirements:

- ➡ the **minimum** number of days a student must complete in practice education to deliver on achievement of the *Standards of Proficiency*; and
- ➡ the identification of core service user groups that a student must engage with during the course of practice education

For Educational Psychologists, the Board is proposing an additional stipulation around the environments in which students must have exposure to during the course of their practice education.



### What does this mean?

#### Minimum Number of Placement Days

The minimum number of days a student is engaged in practice education is comprised of:

- ➡ the time spent **on-site** in a placement setting in the practice of Clinical, Counselling or Educational Psychology. This includes direct engagement with service users, research, planning and evaluating assessments and interventions, completion of reports and other administrative duties associated with practice;
- ➡ the time spent being **observed in clinical practice** with service users by the placement supervisor conducting student assessment; and
- ➡ the time allocated to **academic activities** associated with practice education. This includes completion of placement assessment documentation, and attendance at supervisory meetings with a placement supervisor.

## The Board's Proposal

The Psychologists Registration Board has proposed setting distinct practice placement requirements for Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychologists.

In making its proposals, the Board has reviewed and considered the total number of placement days currently required on education and training programmes, noting the funding support received to facilitate the total number of placement experience required.

The Board's remit and responsibility is to set the threshold – minimum – number of days required for a student to be able to demonstrate achievement of the *Standards of Proficiency*. It is not able to factor into its decision currently available funding to education programmes. However, it is important to highlight that education programmes are able to set the total number of placement days above the threshold level identified in the Board's Criteria.



### For Clinical Psychology, a student must:

- ➡ complete a minimum of 240 days in practice placement; and
- ➡ undertake practice placements with the following service user groups:
  - Children and Adolescents
  - Adults and Older Adults
  - Child and Adult Disability

### For Counselling Psychology, a student must:

- ➡ complete a minimum of 240 days in practice placement; and
- ➡ undertake practice placements with the following service user groups:
  - Children and Adolescents
  - Adults and Older Adults

### For Educational Psychology, a student must:

- ➡ complete a minimum of 240 days in practice placement; and
- ➡ undertake practice placements with the following service user groups:
  - Children, Adolescents and Adults in educational services
  - Child and Adolescent Disability
  - Adult Disability

In addition, students must complete practice placements in **both educational and health and social care** settings in order to appropriately prepare future practitioners for the holistic practice of the specialism.

## The Board's Rationale

In proposing these practice placement requirements, the Board has weighed and considered:

- the practice of each area of specialisation and the types of engagement a practitioner has with service users;
- the threshold level of knowledge and skill as articulated in the draft *Standards of Proficiency* for each area of specialisation;
- the requirement that students must demonstrate achievement of all *Standards of Proficiency* during their education and training;
- current national and international practice education requirements in the education and training for entry into practice;
- ensuring the principle of proportionality, as required under legislation, is applied in the context of the mutual recognition of international qualifications; and
- current entry requirements for entry into practice in Ireland – around the duration of practice and the service user groupings to have experience with – set by employers in the statutory sector.



# Chapter 5

## Have your say!



### The Psychologists Registration Board's draft Criteria for Education and Training Programmes for:

- ➡ Clinical Psychology
- ➡ Counselling Psychology
- ➡ Educational Psychology

are available to access on: <https://coru.ie/public-protection/public-consultations/current-consultations/>

**We are looking for your feedback and perspective. We would like your views on:**

- ➡ the level of qualification for entry to the register for both professions; and
- ➡ the requirements set by the Board for practice placement.

You can access the consultation questionnaires and all relevant information on the CORU website:

[www.coru.ie](https://www.coru.ie)

The consultations are open for feedback from 7 October 2024 to 29 November 2024